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A JEWISH CHARACTERISTIC

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NATIONAL LOYALTY:

A JEWISH CHARACTERISTIC.

BY THE

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National Loyalty: A Jewish Characteristic.

It is said the Jew is of no country, and of all countries. It is true that Jews have no country in the usual acceptation of the phrase. It is, therefore, all the more worthy of remark, if, with a peculiar faith distinguishing them from the rest of mankind, love of country is found to be one of the strongest characteristics of the Jewish race. Such is the attestation of all history and experience. This virtue is well worth recording in connection with anything that touches upon the history of our people in the past or present.

With us, loyalty to the Government is inherent. We have always been advocates of law and order, and have invariably been deferential to the national policy, notwithstanding that in some countries our civil disabilities have made our lot hard to bear. "Without law there can be no civilization," is a Talmudic phrase, and the sages of the Mishna judiciously taught, "Pray for the welfare of the Government."

In France, the Jew is an ardent republican, as in England he is for constitutional monarchy. In this country he is "more loyal than the king;" sink or swim, he is with the Republic. In the late war he was a Federal or a Confederate according to his political conviction. What is true of his patriotism in Europe and the colonies, is also true in America, with this pleasing addition. The natural bent of the Jewish mind is towards freedom and liberty; therefore, a republic appeals to the Israelite's sense of loyalty and justice in a far greater degree than a monarchy, limited or autocratic. It is for this reason that Israelites are American in sentiment immediately upon their arrival in the new world. They require no long drilling to understand the fundamental principles of the Constitution of the United States, because

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the natural aspiration arising from their normal condition and subsequent history, is for that freedom of religious worship and opinion that can only exist under free government. Whether by the noble strain of its ancient origin and lessons in adversity so long continued as to take away the sting of resentment and revenge, it may not have received special fitness for the preservation of free institutions in those countries where such principles have once obtained a foothold, and for their conservation against excesses ever freighted with reaction, as well as remarkable capacity for development under their benign influence, so abundantly testified to in this country, may well deserve the profound attention of the future historian of American civilization. With this predisposition the recent Jewish emigrant is much more entitled to be called "American" than the native who is at variance with the primary doctrines of our government.

The Jewish character embraces specific elements by which the process of assimilation is easily accomplished. The Israelite has been taught in the merciless school of experience how best to adapt himself to existing circumstances and conditions. For all that, it is difficult to bind him to anything that is opposed to liberty of conscience. He understands that Jeremiah impressed the people with the necessity of seeking "the welfare of the city" . . . "for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." He appreciates the Talmudic dictum, "The law of the country is binding," but he will not blindly submit to injustice or discrimination. He will show his disapproval of all oppressive statutes and will incline towards independence of thought and deed, for that is the natural preference of his race. If his liberty is threatened it is quite possible that he will enter his name upon a list of revolutionists; give him his rights and he is an exemplary citizen. He loves freedom first and then

the law; in countries where the law bespeaks freedom, he is in his element. Under all circumstances, however, he will stand ready to defend the cause of the state, with the best of its patriots. Among other instances recorded in history, we read of two of our co-religionists, both living at the present day, who, in riotous times, voluntarily headed a detachment of police, preserving the peace for the benefit of all concerned.

The partiality of Israelites for the government of the United States is produced by fixed causes, apart from the liberty-loving principle before mentioned. In this country there is not the slightest outward difference between the Jew and any other citizen. He attends the same schools, studies the same subjects, is accorded the same rights and privileges, and, hence, imbibes the same patriotic ideas as his fellow-countryman. In religion alone does he differ from his compatriot; but because his religion lays special stress upon love of country and loyalty, the Jew is rather more of an American than his neighbor. It is worthy of mention that when once the tenets influencing the laws of this country are understood the foreign-born seeks to throw off the yoke of allegiance to any other country. It can be safely said that the thousands of emigrants who have made themselves more or less acquainted with our Constitution, have, with but few exceptions, signified their desire to become citizens of America. With remarkable intelligence they grasped the legislative measures of our commonwealth, and learned that while they were being ruled they were also ruling. The difference between the freedom here and the oppression abroad, is enough in itself to guarantee an undying affection for this land; and when we couple this condition with the Israelite's inborn craving for independence, his fealty to America reaches its climax. The Jewish

native inherits his loyalty legitimately and naturally. By a progressive development in nature, humanity reaches a state of perfection from an imperfect organism. In like manner, the germ of patriotism planted in the breasts of our fathers and forefathers, cultivated and nurtured through the summer's orb of prosperity and the wintry blasts of adversity has produced good fruit in our lives, and will, under the mild rays of America's sun, become a perennial growth.

And not by arm-chair theorizing do we make good our claim. We have always been taught that military service is not optional but obligatory. This doctrine found expression during the American War of Independence, and in subsequent engagments—numbers of Israelites taking part in these international and civic conflicts. To particularize, we find that in 1776 Mordecai Sheftall, after honorable field routine, was made Commissary-General of the Georgia Brigade, that Jacob L. Cohen, and Col. Solomon Bush, of Charleston, organized a corps of Jewish volunteers, and that in 1815 Judah Touro was severely wounded at the defense of New Orleans; and in the Navy, Uriah P. Levy, for services rendered, was created Commodore in 1837 and Post Captain in 1844. One cannot, however, begin to enumerate the deeds accomplished by Israelites for their country's cause. Every decade since 1776 has seen the Jewish name coupled with patriotic action. The country at large has often taken cognizance of this. Senatorial, congressional and other offices have been held by our co-religionists. Hyams, Yulee, Judah P. Benjamin, and Jonas, are well known personalities. There have been a number of Israelites in the consular service; Major Mordecai M. Noah, B. F. Peixotto, Simon Wolf, Oscar Straus and Solomon Hirsch, have all been honored by their home government, and by the countries in which they represented the United States.

It were well to impress upon our Christian fellow-citizens that there is no analogy between the terms "Jew" and "American." We hear ourselves called "Jews" in contradistinction to "Americans." Jew is analogous to Christian, Mahometan or Brahmin, but not to American, Englishman or German. The misuse of the term under remark, has caused us to be looked upon as aliens, whereas we are without doubt, "plus royaliste que le roi." Israelites are divided in their political opinions as Christians are, each man casting the ballot for his party whether it is represented by a co-religionist or by a votary of another sect. Because of their loyality, the Jews in the old city of Antioch received full rights of citizenship. For four centuries Rome gave them civil and military employment. In China they held the most important offices of the state. At different times the highest political positions in Italy, Spain and Portugal, were held by Israelites. In 1645, in Brazil the States-General passed an ordinance by which "the persons, goods and rights of the Jew were taken under the special protection of the government because of the fidelity and courage which that people had on every occasion displayed towards the authorities." In the United States, mention of Jewish loyalty was made by no less a personage than Washington in his famous letters to our co-religionists of Philadelphia, Savannah and Charleston, and Henry Clay employed Joseph B. Nones as his private secretary. In their aspirations for liberty, Jews have not hesitated to imperil their fortunes in what, judged by all human evidence, seemed hazardous causes. In Europe it was a Jew who offered William of Orange two millions of guilders upon the slenderest chances of the return of the same, when his government was in straightened circumstances. On this side of the ocean, Haym Solomon financially supported the American party in

revolutionary days; Mordecai M. Noah almost beggared himself for this country, and Judah Touro donated $10,000 towards the completion of the Bunker Hill monument; to say nothing of the zeal with which our people participate in patriotic celebrations and the large sums of money they so freely give for their observance.

Prayers offered by Jewish congregations to the throne of God for the recovery of the sick, among our most useful men, is a common occurrence. No synagogue service is complete without a prayer for the government and its officials, just as sacrifices were offered twice daily in Jerusalem for Cæsar and for the Roman people.

In brief, the Israelite in all countries differs from his compatriots proportionately to his ill-treatment. He thinks and feels like them in the same ratio as he is well used. He asks only for the same justice that is meted out to other sects and the right of citizenship without being forced to violate his conscience. It is a bad plan to label him alien and then upbraid him with his indifference to national policy. In America we are Americans with the best in the land, affected by everything that affects our fellow-citizens. We exhibit the same national characteristics; above all, we are patriotic. I close as I began, by directing attention to the suggestiveness of the inquiry whether the future Guizot or Buckle of America may not retrospectively discover that the Jews have fulfilled a high mission in this liberty-loving land of ours; a mission impressed upon them by heredity, and fostered by adversity, that conjoins with lofty aspirations for independence and a capacity to do and to suffer in its cause, a conservation and love of law and order that by forbidding the excesses of socialism and anarchy effectually prevents precipitation by reaction into the direful disasters of despotic government.

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